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INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION FOR THE MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM IN WESTERN MINDANAO

Background

In 1998, the Center for Health Development (CHD) of Zamboanga Peninsula organized a Regional Technical Assistance Team to support the implementation of the LGU Performance Program (LPP) in the Western Mindanao region. The team was composed of technical staff from the CHD and the Regional Population Office. Members of the team were designated as case managers for specific provinces and cities, and were involved in aspects of LPP implementation such as advocacy, planning, monitoring, and program reviews. These activities marked the beginning of formal collaboration between the CHD and the RPO for project implementation.

With the phase-out of the LPP in 2000, collaboration between the two agencies waned since, except for monitoring, there were almost no more LPP-related activities that required the involvement of the team. It was not until 2001, when the CHD became involved in the implementation of the Matching Grant Program (MGP), that the team was revived. Three cities and six municipalities in the region are currently enrolled in the MGP, and these numbers are expected to grow within the next year.

With a number of programs and projects requiring the attention of the CHD and a large number of local government units (LGUs) needing technical assistance, the CHD personnel are overextended. Therefore, while MGP guidelines do not require the participation of the Commission on Population (POPCOM) at either the central or regional levels, the CHD deemed it necessary to involve the RPO in MGP implementation. This decision recognized the RPO's valuable contribution in the past in ensuring the successful implementation of the LPP in the region. The RPO welcomed the idea because the LGUs are also their main clients.

CHD-RPO Collaboration for MGP: How It Works

To formalize the collaboration between CHD-Zamboanga Peninsula and RPO 9, Dr. Lourdes Labiano (CHD Director) and Mr. Rene Bautista (RPO Director) signed terms of reference spelling out the areas for collaboration and the role and commitments of RPO 9 in the implementation, not only of the MGP, but also of other reproductive health/family planning (RH/FP) programs. The areas for collaboration are planning; information, education, communication/motivation (IECM) and



Dr. Lourdes Labiano of CHD-Zamboanga Peninsula and Mr. Rene Bautista of RPO 9 signing the terms of reference for CHD-RPO collaboration in the implementation of the MGP.

advocacy; training; monitoring; data/information management, analysis, and packaging; and evaluation and research. The terms of reference also provide for the designation of an RPO 9 MGP point person for the community-based monitoring and information system (CBMIS), who will work with the CHD MGP point person.

A regional MGP monitoring team composed of seven members—four from the CHD and three from the RPO—was constituted to regularly assess the status of MGP implementation in the enrolled sites. At present, monitoring is done as needed, but as the monitoring team becomes fully functional, quarterly monitoring will be institutionalized. A monitoring tool for this purpose is being finalized. With a standardized monitoring tool, anybody from the team can now conduct monitoring independently, that is, an RPO monitor no longer needs to be accompanied by a CHD staff member. Regular monitoring of project activities will thus be ensured. Each monitor is expected to prepare a monitoring report for distribution to the concerned mayor, City/Municipal Health Officer, Provincial Health Officer, and MGP coordinator. This report, with the monitoring tool, becomes the basis for the succeeding monitoring period.

A regional MGP training team was likewise organized. It has six members, three from the CHD and three from the RPO. Recently, all members of the training team participated in the MGP Technical Assistance Package training course conducted by Management Sciences



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Box 1. Areas for Collaboration between the CHD and the RPO

Planning

- Formulation of an annual regional plan for reproductive health/family planning program management
- Provision of technical assistance to LGUs in MGP plan formulation
- Development of an RH/FP program operational plan for the region

Advocacy & IECM

- Conduct of advocacy activities among LGUs, NGOs, religious and community leaders, program implementers, and other stakeholders
- Conceptualization, development, and dissemination of RH/FP IEC materials

Training

- Organization of core trainers for the CBMIS, premarital counseling, natural family planning, and other RH/FP-related capability building programs
- Development of syllabuses and evaluation tools for training courses and seminars on the CBMIS, premarital counseling, and natural family planning

Monitoring

- Development of an MGP monitoring tool
- Participation in MGP monitoring and preparation of reports for submission to the CHD
- Organization of an MGP monitoring team

Data/Information Management, Analysis, & Packaging

- Provision of technical assistance to LGUs in the validation, analysis, and interpretation of CBMIS data
- Packaging of CBMIS data and information for dissemination and utilization

Evaluation & Research

- Conduct of program implementation reviews and consultative workshops
- Development of RH/FP-related research proposals
- Provision of technical assistance to LGUs in the documentation of best practices

for Health (MSH) to prepare them to introduce the package to their LGUs. A week after the training, the regional MGP point persons handled the Phase I training for four of their LGU enrollees, under the supervision of MSH. Henceforth, the training team will conduct the training courses on its own.

In the area of advocacy, the RPO, through its Policy Champions Team project, made possible the promotion of CBMIS as an operations research tool for the identification of policy interventions to respond to the unmet needs of women and children. This advocacy initiative was piloted in Zamboanga City. As a result, the LGU funded training on the CBMIS for all its health workers and *Barangay* (Village) Health Workers. The RPO invited the CHD MGP point person to be a member of the Policy Champions Team.

Resources for the MGP-related activities of the regional technical assistance team, such as monitoring and participation in project meetings and forums, come from the MGP Management Fund of the CHD. To fund the participation of RPO personnel who are members of the team, the CHD Director issues a regional order that includes their

names, which the inviting agency also has to include in its letter of invitation to the CHD. This process facilitates the preparation of the regional order authorizing the payment of transportation and per diem to the invitees.

Benefits of Interagency Collaboration

The close collaboration between CHD-Zamboanga Peninsula and RPO 9 has brought a number of benefits to both agencies. It has augmented the CHD's human resources for MGP-related activities. With the assistance of the RPO, the CHD has been able to provide the required technical assistance to the LGUs, conduct monitoring, organize training programs, and perform other project-related functions with fewer CHD staff.

The CHD has also tapped the RPO for its advocacy work and for the preparation of technical papers and reports and presentation materials. Maintaining a good working relationship with the RPO also made it possible for the CHD to access the resources of the local population offices (such as a vehicle) even for non-MGP activities. Moreover, the CHD can easily request the substitution of the RPO Director for the CHD Director for important CHD-led RH/FP activities when the CHD Director is unavailable.

For the RPO, collaboration has paved the way for the designation of Population Officers at the LGU level and revitalized the existing local population offices. The regional technical assistance team has made sure that the population offices will continue to be involved and thus invited them to participate in the MGP training. The active participation of the RPO in the MGP, particularly in planning, training, and monitoring, has helped increase its visibility at the LGU level.

The collaboration has also enabled the RPO to have access to additional funds, since it can now piggyback its monitoring onto the regular monitoring conducted by the MGP. Finally, the collaboration made sharing of technical expertise possible between the two agencies.



The CHD & RPO MGP point persons facilitating an MGP-TAP training course for their LGUs.

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